




# THE LIFE AND SURPRISING ADVENTURES OF JOHN NUTTING

BATCHELDER, SAMUEL FRANCIS, 1870-1927





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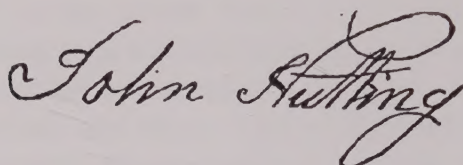
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ADVENTURES OF JOHN NUTTING, CAMBRIDGE  
LOYALIST



[From his Memorial to Lord George Germain, 1777.]

To paraphrase Cowper, hymning the surprising adventures of another John:

John Nutting was a carpenter  
Of credit and renown.  
A train-band captain eke was he  
Of famous Cambridge town.

His father was James the locksmith, of humble but respectable pedigree, — so humble that only his wife's first name, Mercy, is recorded.<sup>1</sup> Young John was born 14 January, 1739, Old Style.<sup>2</sup> Within the week he was baptized,<sup>3</sup> after the prompt, Godfearing fashion of his day, and named for his uncle, the aristocrat of the family, who held the double distinction of a Harvard degree and the Collectorship at Salem.

Six years later his father died,<sup>4</sup> and the lad, on reaching suitable age, was apprenticed to John Walton,<sup>5</sup> housewright, of Reading. This worthy was destined to play an important part in his career,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. L. R. Paige, *History of Cambridge*, 616, etc.

<sup>2</sup> From data collected by John's grandson, the late Charles Martyr Nutting, K.C., of Halifax, most kindly placed at my disposal by his nephew, Henry Haliburton Robinson, Esq., of London. Hereinafter referred to as Nutting Papers.

<sup>3</sup> 21 January, 1739. Register of First Parish, Cambridge.

<sup>4</sup> Administration granted to the widow 27 Jan. 1745-6, with an allowance for the three youngest (*sic*) children "one of which was sickly." Middlesex Probate Records, No. 16138. It seems impossible to suppose John was the invalid.

<sup>5</sup> 96 Massachusetts Archives (Muster Rolls), 420.

at least in that portion of it connected with Cambridge. He is often called Captain Walton,<sup>1</sup> and we may surmise that it was through his influence that his apprentice, when only seventeen, marched from Cambridge in Captain Fuller's company of Colonel William Brattle's regiment "on the alarm for the relief of Fort William Henry."<sup>2</sup> He served but two weeks on that expedition, getting no farther than Springfield, where the news of the final disaster to the ill-fated garrison probably reached his command.

The next year he enlisted<sup>3</sup> under Captain Aaron Fay in "a company of foot in His Majesty's service," forming a part of Colonel Ebenezer Nichols's regiment raised by Massachusetts "for the reduction of Canada." This time he saw real service, and on a pretty considerable scale. Nichols's regiment formed part of the composite force of over fifteen thousand men, regulars and militia, that gathered that summer on the shores of Lake George, and under the inefficient Abercrombie made a bootless attack on Montcalm, entrenched at Ticonderoga. Young Jack must have had his fill of wilderness-marching, lake-paddling, and stockade-building; and perhaps of fighting as well, for on at least one occasion his regiment was severely cut up.<sup>4</sup> He may have seen and must have lamented the untimely death of young Lord Howe, who, though nominally second in command, was the life and soul of the expedition.

These early seeds of martial experience evidently fell on good ground. Nutting's aptitude for military life, especially of the militia variety, as well as the early development of his powers of command, organization, persuasion, and *camaraderie*, so essential to promotion therein, may be inferred from the fact that ere the Revolution he had been elected "acting lieutenant" of the Cambridge company, — doubtless in place of Lieutenant Samuel Thatcher, who on the reorganization of the militia shortly before the outbreak of active hostilities had been promoted Captain, vice Thomas Gard-

<sup>1</sup> In 1775, when he had moved to Cambridge, he was first lieutenant in the local company, with his brother for second. L. R. Paige, *History of Cambridge*, 408

<sup>2</sup> 95 Massachusetts Archives (Muster Rolls), 377.

<sup>3</sup> 2 May, 1758. 96 Massachusetts Archives (Muster Rolls), 420. Nichols was a Reading man. L. Eaton, *Genealogical History of Reading*, 98

<sup>4</sup> Cf. R. Rogers, *Journal*, 121. J. Cleaveland, *Journal*; xii. Essex Institute Historical Collections, 190; etc.



ner.<sup>1</sup> In this position his influence was certainly sufficient to make his leadership sought by both sides in the struggle,<sup>2</sup> as we shall see.

Perhaps it is not too fanciful to picture the young militiaman returning in November from his first campaign, with the irresistible air of all true sons of Mars, making conquest then and there of the heart of his master's daughter, Mary Walton. At all events we find him three years later, just out of his indentures and entitled to call himself housewright on his own account, preparing a home for his bride in Cambridge. On November 7, 1761, he bought of William Bordman for £16 lawful money a little lot of a quarter of an acre (about where the Epworth Church now stands) "on the highway or Common as far as the land belonging to the Heirs of Mr. Johnathan Hastings dec<sup>d</sup>" and in front of "the Tan Yard," with "half the well."<sup>3</sup> Here he built a modest house "two story high, three rooms on a floor"—"a good house," as one of his boarders testified later,<sup>4</sup> and it is something for a boarder to say that. Here the young couple established themselves, and here, 26 April, 1762,<sup>5</sup> was born their first child, a daughter, baptized<sup>6</sup> Mary for her mother; her father, as was customary (if not already done), "owning the covenant" the same day in Dr. Appleton's meeting. The next June he bought an additional strip of land from Bordman for £6 lawful.<sup>7</sup>

The extant records of his next few years are mainly concerned with the good old-fashioned steady increases to the family, till half a dozen babies were tumbling about the little house opposite the common. John Junior was born 3 March, 1764;<sup>8</sup> Mercy (named from

<sup>1</sup> L. R. Paige, History of Cambridge, 408.

<sup>2</sup> Memorial to the Commissioners on Loyalists' Claims. Heard at Halifax, 29 December, 1785. Audit Office, Loyalist Series, Bundle 51, Public Record Office, London.

<sup>3</sup> 59 Middlesex Deeds, 266.

<sup>4</sup> Testimony of Nathaniel Bust before the Commissioners, 29 December, 1785. American Loyalists Transcripts, xiii. 303. Public Library, New York City.

<sup>5</sup> Nutting Papers.

<sup>6</sup> 9 May, 1762. First Parish Records.

<sup>7</sup> 59 Middlesex Deeds, 624.

<sup>8</sup> Nutting Papers. Baptized 11 March, 1764. First Parish Records. Died unmarried 30 July, 1822. Nutting Papers.

⊗ married 23 Apr. 1761. She was born 1 Aug. 1740.  
"Vital Records of Reading, 1912."



her paternal grandmother) arrived on Washington's Birthday, 1766;<sup>1</sup> Mary No. 2 (No. 1 having died 12 April, 1766<sup>2</sup>) came to carry on the name, 1 March, 1768;<sup>3</sup> Elizabeth (another family cognomen) opened her eyes on 5 April, 1770;<sup>4</sup> James (named from his paternal grandfather) joined the flock on 8 May, 1772;<sup>5</sup> and Susanna put in an appearance on 28 August, 1773.<sup>6</sup>

Meanwhile our housewright was becoming a man of substance and standing. In 1768 he was appointed one of the parish tax-collectors, and had the handling of as much as a hundred and sixty pound on a single accounting.<sup>7</sup> In his turn he began to take apprentices.<sup>8</sup> His father-in-law Walton seems to have put work in his way, and certainly stood behind him with financial backing.<sup>9</sup> He himself described his business as "extensive," both as master-builder and in the lumber trade.<sup>10</sup> Among other important jobs, he did nearly a hundred and forty pounds' worth of work in building Mr. Thomas Oliver's fine house,<sup>11</sup> which under the name of "Elmwood" still stands stout and good.

He also dabbled in maritime interests. A strong streak of the sea was in his blood. The family name was well represented among the amphibious population of Salem, Marblehead, and Glou-

<sup>1</sup> Nutting Papers Baptized 3 March, 1766. First Parish Records. Died 1784. Nutting Papers

<sup>2</sup> Stone in Cambridge Churchyard

<sup>3</sup> Nutting Papers Baptized 6 March, 1768 First Parish Records Married Captain Daniel McNeil of North Carolina, 27 November, 1788, at Halifax, and had three children Died circa 1795. Nutting Papers

<sup>4</sup> Nutting Papers Baptized 6 May, 1770 First Parish Records Died between 1776 and 1783. See *post*.

<sup>5</sup> Nutting Papers. Baptized perhaps at Christ Church, for by this date Nutting had left the First Parish meeting. Died between 1776 and 1783

<sup>6</sup> Ditto

<sup>7</sup> First Parish Account Book labelled "1763"

<sup>8</sup> When he went to Halifax he took two of them along Memorial to Germain, 28 February, 1778 Audit Office, Loyalist Series, Bundle 75, Public Record Office, London.

<sup>9</sup> 71 Middlesex Deeds, 430

<sup>10</sup> Memorial to the Commissioners Heard at Halifax, 29 December, 1785. Audit Office, Loyalist Series, Bundle 51, Public Record Office, London

<sup>11</sup> "Account of Particulars of the Expences of Thomas Olvers Buildings in Cambridge" Bristol, 2 October, 1783. Audit Office, Loyalist Series, Bundle 48, Public Record Office, London.

cester,<sup>1</sup> and in the earliest records of the American Navy.<sup>2</sup> His father appears to have been the armorer of the little man-of-war *Prince of Orange* in the early 40's,<sup>3</sup> and at his death left, according to the inventory of his estate, "a Sam 100 /-, codline 5 /-."<sup>4</sup> Of his brothers, James was a "marriner"<sup>5</sup> and Samuel a surgeon aboard the *Independence* and the *Rhodes* throughout the Revolution.<sup>6</sup> His brother Jonathan was captured in the brig *Ruby* by the British and confined in the prison-ship at St. Lucia; but swam by night with ten companions to a vessel a mile off, overpowered her crew, and sailed away to freedom.<sup>7</sup> Two of his nephews, master and mate, found a sailor's grave in the loss of the *Hercules*.<sup>8</sup> He himself was paid "14/- for boating Mr. Serjeant's goods to Cambridge"<sup>9</sup> when that gentleman arrived as the new rector of Christ Church in the summer of 1767. He was so familiar with the Bay of Fundy and the coast of Maine that he was able a few years later to act as pilot to one of the British expeditions therealong (of which more anon). This familiarity was evidently acquired on coasting-trips to secure his supplies of lumber, which, odd as it may sound, was then almost entirely brought to Boston from the shores of Maine.<sup>10</sup>

It was on these trips that he became interested in acquiring lands "to the Eastward," as the phrase then went — perhaps by

<sup>1</sup> J. K. Nutting, *Nutting Genealogy*, *passim*.

<sup>2</sup> *Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors in the War of the Revolution*, xi. *passim*

<sup>3</sup> *Massachusetts Archives (Muster Rolls)*, *passim*.

<sup>4</sup> *Middlesex Probate Records*, No. 16138.

<sup>5</sup> *Middlesex Probate Records*, No. 16140

<sup>6</sup> *Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors in the War of the Revolution*, xi. *passim*

<sup>7</sup> C. Eaton, *History of Thomaston*, i. 149.

<sup>8</sup> *Idem* ii. 341

<sup>9</sup> *Christ Church Accounts*.

<sup>10</sup> At the outbreak of the Revolution he "left Lumber to the Eastward to the value of £ 40 lawful Money" Testimony before the Commissioners, 29 December, 1785 *American Loyalists Transcripts*, xiii. 301 Public Library, New York City. Moreover, as early as 1750, since "The Fire Wood near Boston is much exhausted, we are under a necessity of fetching it from the Province of *Main*, and Territory of *Sagadahock*" A Wood Sloop with three Hands makes about 15 Voyages *per Ann.* from the Eastward to Boston, may carry about 30 Cord Fire Wood each Voyage" W. Douglass, *A Summary . . . of the British Settlements in North America*, ii. 68



the advice of brother Jonathan, who from 1767 onwards was making considerable purchases and sales of real estate in what is now Thomaston, Maine, and the coast adjacent<sup>1</sup> Following his example, and little foreseeing the results on his own and indeed on his country's history, our John began investing in shore lots, quite in the modern manner, just across Penobscot Bay, in what is now Castine, and up the Bagaduce River.

Save for the straggling clearings of a few of the original grantees,<sup>2</sup> that region was then an unbroken wilderness, covered to the water's edge with those magnificent pines and other evergreens that afforded an apparently inexhaustible supply of the finest timber, especially masts and spars, in a day when masts and spars were a very real necessity. John Nutting set to work, either personally or by proxy, and in a few years was able to inventory his estates as:

"Two Houses to the Eastward of the Province of Massachusetts Bay £ 80" —

Two hundred acres & upwards of good Land in one of the most eligible situations in Penobscot purchased of the grantee<sup>3</sup> who possessed the same upwards of 20 years, more than 30 Acres of which is well cleared and under Improvement, the rest Wooded & Estimated at the least computation at 1000 —

One third part of a Saw Mill adjoining s<sup>d</sup> Land at Penobscot 70 —

A Farm partly cleared & Improved by myself on Bagwidge River, 500 Acres 100 —"<sup>4</sup>

He spent a good deal of money on this property and got considerable returns from it. In 1769 he had on one account with a brother housewright, Nathaniel Kidder of Medford, who was appar-

<sup>1</sup> Wiscasset Deeds, *passim*

<sup>2</sup> See full lists in 117 Massachusetts Archives, and 24 "Court Records" (March, 1762).

<sup>3</sup> Apparently named Busy Testimony of "Josiah Henny, late of Penobscot" before the Commissioners 29 December, 1785 xiii American Loyalists Transcripts, 302. Public Library, New York City The printed copies, generally more accurate, give the name Bary. A Fraser, Second Report, Bureau of Archives, Ontario, 59 Neither form has been otherwise identified

<sup>4</sup> A composite of two schedules, one dated Halifax, 15 January, 1784, the other undated, but heard at Halifax, 29 December, 1785 Both in Audit Office, Loyalist Series, Bundle 51, Public Record Office, London.

ently acting as his agent, no less than £378 lawful money, including many cash payments, the "freight" on forty bushels of corn, thirty-one barrels, etc.<sup>1</sup>

But the year 1770 marks a sudden check in John Nutting's prosperous financial career, and somehow puts him in a hole from which he never completely extricated himself. He had been borrowing small sums from his father-in-law for a good while, and now had to mortgage his Cambridge property to him for £93.<sup>2</sup> Some of his Penobscot lands he had taken for bad debts,<sup>3</sup> and there may have been other sums owing to him not so well secured. At any rate he could not raise ready cash to meet his local creditors, and their suits when once begun came thick and fast.<sup>4</sup> Nathaniel Coolidge of Watertown brought suit against him in that year for lumber sold. In February, 1771, Kidder sued him for the "cash expended to the Eastward." In May the executor of Francis Dizer, "marriner" of Charlestown, sued him for promissory notes, probably on the same subject. In July Abijah Steadman, housewright, sued him on another note. In August John Smith, "taylor," sued him for eight pair of breeches, sundry lambskins and buttons. (The babies were evidently growing up.) In September Nathaniel Prentice, chaisemaker, sued him on an agreement which is so characteristic of the business methods of that day that it may stand repetition:

"for that whereas the pl<sup>t</sup> on ye fourth Day of January last, at Cambridge afores<sup>d</sup> had agreed with & promised ye s<sup>d</sup> John to make & deliver to him, on or before the twenty fifth Day of April then next, another good Chaise such an one as ye pl<sup>t</sup> had before that time made for one Francis Moore, ye s<sup>d</sup> John in consideration thereof then & there promised ye pl<sup>t</sup> to build for ye plaintiff a good Frame for a Barn of thnty Feet square, fourteen feet posts, oak sills, to be to the Acceptance of

<sup>1</sup> Kidder v Nutting, Middlesex Inferiour Court of Common Pleas, 1771 Original Files. In 1786 the charge for a passenger from Boston to Penobscot was 6s. 1 Bangor Historical Magazine, 58

<sup>2</sup> 71 Middlesex Deeds, 430.

<sup>3</sup> Testimony of Lieutenant John Nutting before the Commissioners, Halifax, 29 December, 1785 xiii American Loyalists Transcripts, 303 Public Library, New York City

<sup>4</sup> See original files of Middlesex Inferiour Court of Common Pleas Clerk's Office, East Cambridge



one Sam<sup>d</sup> Choate & one John Walton & to be delivered at ye House of Joseph Miller of Charlestown on or before ye said twenty fifth of April, at ye price of Eleven pounds six shillings & Eight pence; and also to procure for ye pl<sup>t</sup> another Frame twenty four feet in Length & twenty feet in Breadth with Oak Sills & fourteen feet posts, to be delivered at s<sup>d</sup> prentice's Dwelling House in s<sup>d</sup> Cambridge, on or before ye fifteenth Day of June then next at the price of Eight pounds & to be to the Acceptance of the s<sup>d</sup> Choate and Walton, yet s<sup>d</sup> Nutting has never delivered the last mentioned frame, nor ever paid the £6.13.4 . . ."

[Account annexed.]

"To a New Riding Chaise	£22. 0 0
Cr. By a Barn Frame £12 By a pair of Chaise	
Wheels £3 6 8.	15. 6 8
Ball'a due to N. prentice	6 13.4 "

Nutting was evidently at his wits' end to raise money. He negotiated a second mortgage on his Cambridge property to his father-in-law, for £53<sup>1</sup> He took at least one boarder.<sup>2</sup> Some of the suits he defaulted, others he contested on technicalities, and appealed, but did not prosecute the appeal. Occasionally he kept out of sight altogether, perhaps at Penobscot. In all the suits he lost his case. The amounts were generally trifling, and were probably settled by work at his trade. Kidder, whose claim was much the largest, actually proceeded to levy on Nutting's remaining interest in his twice-mortgaged house and lot, apparently conceded to be one-half: "containing a cellar measuring nine fott and four inches . . . the west end of the house containing a Lower Room partly finished a Chamber also a Bed-Chamber North of the Stairs unfinished also half the whole Garret unfinished with the one half of the Entry Ways and Stair Ways in the whole of the House."<sup>3</sup> Prentice, in an attempt to find some property that could be come at by the time he began suit, attached Nutting's pew in the meeting-house. "One of the body Pews the frunt pasing [?] to Henry Prentice the back part to

<sup>1</sup> 72 Middlesex Deeds, 104

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Nathaniel Rust. See his testimony before the Commissioners, *supra*, p. 57, note. Also his affidavit "that he resided at Cambridge many years preceding the late War" Halifax, 15 January, 1784 Audit Office, Loyalist Series, Bundle 51, Public Record Office, London

<sup>3</sup> 73 Middlesex Deeds, 279

Owen Worlen the two Ends on two allies." <sup>1</sup> From this time the unfortunate Nutting seems to have been an unchurched wanderer till he began attending Christ Church, just across the Common from his house. No doubt he already found his sympathies more with the Tory proprietors there than with the congregation in the meeting-house, with so many of whom he must have been by this time on bad terms. Even there he soon got into debt to the churchwardens, but in 1774 he was formally voted the rather unusual privilege of renting a pew, at 24/- per annum. <sup>2</sup>

And now we come to that memorable Thursday, the first of September, 1774, when the Revolution very nearly began at daybreak on Cambridge Common, and when John Nutting definitely cast in his lot with the supporters of law and order and the King's government. In his own words, "receiving an Intimation from Colonel Phipps (Sheriff of the County) of General Gage's intention to remove the Magazine of Powder deposited at that place to Boston; and soliciting the assistance of your Memorialist, he readily assisted; notwithstanding he had been previously importuned by a Mob to head them and prevent the Removal of it. <sup>3</sup> . . . which altogether with his open Avowal of principles of Loyalty, raised the resentment of the populace against him to such a Degree as obliged him to quit his House & Family, & take refuge in Boston, under the protection of the Kings Troops." <sup>4</sup>

In Boston, whither his family soon followed him, he found himself in mighty genteel company, <sup>5</sup> many of his richest and most prominent fellow townsmen having also made it convenient to get in closer touch with the authorities at about the same time or even

<sup>1</sup> Prentice v. Nutting Original Files, *ubi supra*

<sup>2</sup> Christ Church Records

<sup>3</sup> Memorial to the Commissioners Heard at Halifax, 20 December, 1785 Audit Office, Loyalist Series, Bundle 51, Public Record Office, London Cf. his testimony before the Commissioners " . . . altho' the Mob desired and insisted that as an Officer of Militia he should prevent the Ordnance from being removed " xiii American Loyalists Transcripts, 297 Public Library, New York City.

<sup>4</sup> Memorial to German, "Read 22 Dec: 77 " Audit Office, Loyalist Series, Bundle 75, Public Record Office, London

<sup>5</sup> "We have here Earls, Lords & Baronets, I assure you Names that sound Grand " Letter of Samuel Paine, Boston, Oct 2-9, 1775 xxx New England Historical and Genealogical Register, 371



earlier. From this point in his career indeed may be traced the beginnings of a knack of obtaining the friendship and confidence of the nobility and gentry that later developed to surprising proportions. To his credit it must be added that those friendships never seem to have been unmerited nor that confidence misplaced. Unlike so many of his fellow-Tories, whose firm adherence to the Crown was mainly evidenced by a prodigious capacity for running away, his own loyalty, as events soon proved, was of an extremely practical kind.

Boston was full of the King's troops, and more were arriving at short intervals. In the chill nights of the early autumn their tents were already becoming uncomfortable, and the need of substantial housing for them soon became imperative. The authorities prudently forbore to billet the unwelcome visitors upon the town, and decided to build special barracks for them.<sup>1</sup>

The announcement of this design fell upon most unwilling ears. The dullest Bostonian could perceive that the erection of permanent barracks in his beloved and almost autonomous metropolis meant its degradation to the level of a mere garrison town. Moreover it was bruited on good authority that even if the present unhappy differences should be composed a garrison at Boston was to be maintained indefinitely, as a check on any possible future uprisings. The building of barracks immediately assumed the proportions of a grievance, adding one more to the already too plentiful stock of those commodities upon which the spout of rebellion thrived. Attempts therefore to begin the work were met with a most effective passive resistance of the local mechanics. A trial of the regimental carpenters under the chief engineer Montrésor proved such a failure that Gage took measures to secure workmen from New York. "It's my opinion," remarked the observant Mr. John Andrews in his diary, "if they are wise, they won't come." And as a matter of fact they did n't, but snug on Manhattan Island contented themselves with passing the usual patriotic resolutions.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The printed accounts of the following episode are mainly to be found in 1 P. Force, *American Archives*, 4th series, 802-821, and J. Andrews, *Diary*, viii *Massachusetts Historical Society Proceedings*, 300. See also "Letters of Hugh Earl Percy," who was in direct charge of the camp.

<sup>2</sup> Some came later, and a pretty set they were. A few days before the evac-

Whereupon, "in consequence of the favorable representations of Lieutenant Governor Oliver and Gen Gage's earnest solicitations," John Nutting came forward and stoutly undertook the unpopular post of master-carpenter, "being," as he afterwards boasted, "the first person of an American that entered into the King's service when the troubles began." His executive capacity was astonishing. In the midst of the general disaffection, by hook or crook he managed to secure some forty or fifty men,<sup>1</sup> and the barrack frames began to rise both on the Common and at the Neck. The sight was too much for the Selectmen. If they could not traverse the orders of the Governor, they could adopt indirect methods, and on September 24 they significantly resolved "that should the mechanicks or other inhabitants of this town assist the troops by furnishing them with artificers labourers or materials of any kind to build barracks or other places of accommodation for the troops, they will probably incur the displeasure of their brethren, who may withhold their contributions for the relief of the town, and deem them as enemies to the rights and liberties of America"

Gage saw the trick, and immediately sent for the Selectmen, "seemed a great deal worried," and with plentiful profanity represented that the work must go on, as the regiments had to be lodged somewhere. The wily Selectmen replied that for their own part they should actually prefer to see the soldiers kept together in barracks under discipline rather than scattered irresponsibly about the town, but that they had to consider the attitude of the surrounding places. In truth this was extremely threatening. "If they are suffered to proceed," observed Mr. Andrews, as to the imported laborers, "the matter is settled with us, for it is with the greatest difficulty that the country are restrained from coming in

nation one of the Selectmen wrote "The Inhabitants in the utmost distress, thro' fear of the Town being destroyed by the Soldiers, a party of New York Carpenters with axes going thro the town breaking open houses, &c Soldiers and sailors plundering of houses, shops, warehouses" Newell's Journal. 1. Massachusetts Historical Society Collections, 4th series, 274.

<sup>1</sup> Memorial to Germain, "Read 22 Decr 77" Audit Office, Loyalist Series, Bundle 75, Public Record Office, London He later explained that he got them "from the Country" Testimony before Commissioners, Halifax, 29 Dec 1785 xiii. American Loyalists Transcripts, 297. Public Library, New York City

even now." The Governor next interviewed "King" Hancock, begging him to get the vote reconsidered; but in vain, and on the 26th, "at four o'clock the workmen *all* pack'd up their tools and left the barracks, frames, &ca." The next day a combined meeting of the committees of all the neighboring towns voted not to supply the army with lumber, bricks, labor, or in short anything but those provisions "which mere humanity requires."

Affairs were now apparently at a stand. But the master-builder was a man of resource. The ship-carpenters from the fleet were pressed into service, while, acting no doubt on Nutting's knowledge of affairs "to the Eastward," an armed schooner was despatched to Halifax "for all the Artificers they can procure from there." Still the difficulties of the job were not over. On land the ship-carpenters proved in truth out of their element, "being very ignorant of the method of framing and indeed of any sort of work they wanted done," and had to be dismissed. Wages then unheard of were offered for a day's work — two dollars, three dollars, "or even any price at all" — but not a workman came forward.<sup>1</sup> Lumber soon became so scarce that it was hard to find boards enough to make even a coffin for the dead, to say nothing of a habitation for the living. A shipload of planks intended for Boston was seized by the rebels at Portsmouth, and got no farther. An old brick house at Point Shirley was torn down and turned into ill-constructed barrack chimneys. The troops were almost in mutiny for lack of their promised accommodations, and several regiments had to remain aboard the transports they arrived in, made fast along the wharves. Somehow Nutting struggled on with the work till about the middle of October,<sup>2</sup> when a party of carpenters arrived from Portsmouth (probably secured "at the Eastward"), and the idle and hungry Boston workmen had their first sight of "scabs" on high wages taking the bread out of their mouths. This was the last straw, and the usual recourse of all strikers followed. Nutting

<sup>1</sup> Montrésor, the Chief Engineer, reported that in his department on October 1 "an addition was thought absolutely necessary of 1 master carpenter, 1 foreman carpenter, 20 carpenters," etc. x1 J. Almon, Parliamentary Register, 279

<sup>2</sup> Captain Evelyn notices the occurrence briefly in a letter dated 31 October, 1774. He adds that the man was by way of being hanged. Letters of Captain W. G. Evelyn, 39.



was waylaid at night — but he shall tell the story in his own words, as found in his subsequent memorial to the Commissioners on Loyalists' Claims:

“Several members of the Rebel Committee called on him and used every perswasion and promised every advantage to induce him to quit the King's Works, but after finding their Entreaties without effect they proceeded to Violence, a Mob the next day having concealed themselves, seized on your Memorialist on his Way from thence to his Lodgings in Boston and after almost killing him put him on board a Boat under charge of Four men with directions to convey him to Cambridge to be examined by the Committee then sitting there; but, fortunately for your Memorialist, thro' perswasion and a small consideration they were prevailed on to set him at Liberty near Cambridge from whence he returned to his Duty at the Lines; in passing from whence to his Lodgings or otherways, General Gage was pleased in future to furnish him with a Party of Men to protect him from the Insults of the Inhabitants.”<sup>1</sup>

In some fashion therefore the barracks were finished, at least “at the lines,” — those on the Common seem to have been given up, — and by November 16 they were occupied; none too soon, for the number of fatal cases of illness from exposure was already considerable. Nutting's work however continued. There was much to be done, not only on the fortifications under Montrésor, of the Engineers, but on gun-carriages, ammunition-wagons, etc under Colonel Cleaveland of the Royal Artillery,<sup>2</sup> and perhaps on the long-suffering lighthouse, which was at last repaired and relit in December of 1775.<sup>3</sup> Press of business might well have been his excuse, if a polite one were needed, for his continued absence from home. By an odd retaliation in kind, his much encumbered house, or, as it was elegantly termed, “Seat in Cambridge in the Spring of the Year 1775 . . . was made a Bariack for the american Souldiers and

<sup>1</sup> Memorial to the Commissioners, heard 29 December, 1785, at Halifax. Audit Office, Loyalist Series, Bundle 51, Public Record Office, London

<sup>2</sup> See his certificate, London, 7 June, 1778. Audit Office, Loyalist Series, Bundle 75, Public Record Office, London

<sup>3</sup> 23 December, 1775. Howe to Dartmouth xi J Almon, Parliamentary Register, 271. At least one party of carpenters at work there was kidnapped by the provincials, but Nutting evidently was not included

much Damaged thereby.”<sup>1</sup> It was later taken possession of by his ex-master, backer, father-in-law and mortgagee<sup>2</sup> John Walton, on a quite excusable “Idea that Mr. Nutting’s Family have cost him that much.”<sup>3</sup>

Our loyal carpenter continued actively employed in Boston until within about six weeks of the evacuation. Then under orders from Captain Spry he removed, with his wife, six children, two ’prentices, and “about fourteen artificers” to Halifax, leaving, as it proved, his native heath forever, — leaving too a memory that rankled in the patriotic breast for many a long day. Small wonder that in the Proscription Act of October, 1778, he is one of the few Cambridge men specifically enumerated as having “left this state . . . and joined the enemies thereof . . . manifesting an inimical disposition . . . and a design to aid and abet the enemies thereof in their wicked purposes.”<sup>4</sup>

His work at Halifax through that heart-breaking spring of 1776 can be easily imagined. If ever a housewright was needed, it was then and there. We are all familiar with the picture — the miserable little fishing village, with a proportion of foul dram-shops before which the typical western mining town seems a Shaker settlement,<sup>5</sup> completely overwhelmed by the multitude of gently-nurtured refugees, whole families seated crying on the surf-beaten rocks without so much as a tent over their heads, lacking food, fuel, and above all shelter.<sup>6</sup> If it was not Nutting’s idea it was at least characteristic of him to have devised the expedient of getting

<sup>1</sup> Affidavits of John Walton, Cambridge, and Renjamun Walton, Reading 29 October, 1788. Audit Office, Loyalist Series, Bundle 51, Public Record Office, London.

<sup>2</sup> And apparently also his successor as lieutenant of the Cambridge company L. R. Paige, *History of Cambridge*, 408.

<sup>3</sup> Claimant’s testimony before the Commissioners. Halifax, 29 December, 1785. xiii *American Loyalists Transcripts*, 300. Public Library, New York City With characteristic assurance Nutting some years later demanded compensation for his Cambridge property to the tune of £735. See schedules mentioned on page 94.

<sup>4</sup> Province Laws, 1778–1779, 2nd Session, chapter 24.

<sup>5</sup> One of the inhabitants wrote in 1760 “The business of one half the town is to sell rum, and the other half to drink it.” xi. T. C. Haliburton, *History of Nova Scotia*, 13.

<sup>6</sup> Abigail Adams to John Adams, 21 April, 1776.

ashore the cabooses and deck-houses of the transports and converting them into whole streets of little huts.<sup>1</sup> We can fancy how vigorously he must have pushed forward the work. Cabins, sheds, camps, anything that the limited supply of lumber allowed, had to be run up as fast as possible, ruined cottages repaired and made tenantable, the dazed and drunken fishermen driven to work, the inefficient shipwrights from the fleet made the most of, something provided in the way of wharves and landing facilities, store-sheds, more barracks again, and what not

The fortifications of the town too were in a perilous state. Although Halifax had already been termed "the northern key of His Majesty's American dominions"<sup>2</sup> and a royal dockyard established there, yet the defences had been allowed to go to rack and ruin; batteries were dismantled, gun-carriages decayed and guns on the ground. In fact the town lay practically "open to the country on every side."<sup>3</sup> At last the sudden military importance of the station and the persistent and disquieting rumors of an attack upon it<sup>4</sup> moved the home government to decided action, and the army estimates for 1776 contemplated an expenditure of nearly £1500 sterling on constructions and repairs there.<sup>5</sup> It was not an easy matter to get the work done. In that scattered and unskilled community, where a few years before two distillers, two hatters and a sugar-baker made up the entire manufacturing class,<sup>6</sup> it was next to impossible to obtain either materials or workmen. Again, however, Nutting ap-

<sup>1</sup> E. P. Weaver, "Nova Scotia during the Revolution," *x* American Historical Review, 67.

<sup>2</sup> Campbell to Hillsborough, 13 January, 1769; 43 Provincial Archives, No. 67. Halifax.

<sup>3</sup> Legge to Dartmouth, 19 August, 1775, 44 Provincial Archives, 76. Halifax.

<sup>4</sup> E. P. Weaver, "Nova Scotia during the Revolution," *x* American Historical Review, 65.

<sup>5</sup> The items were divided among the "Square Store for Small Arms, the Long Store for Small Arms, Bedding Store, Laboratory, Ordinance Yard, Gun Tackling Store, Junk Store, Lumber Yard, Artillery Barracks, Armourer's Shop, Governor's Battery, South Gate Battery, South Five Gun Battery, North Five Gun Battery, and Inclosing Land reserved for his Majesty on the hill." *vi* J. Almon, *Parliamentary Register*, 141. Judging by later plans of the city, not much of this work was actually accomplished.

<sup>6</sup> Francklin to Hillsborough, 11 July, 1768. J. Brynmuer, "Report on Canadian Archives, 1894," 287.



pears to have done wonders, and among other feats to have built by August no less than ten large block-houses, each mounting sixteen guns.<sup>1</sup> We may safely assume that he earned his pay at Halifax "as Master Carpenter and Superintendant of Mechanics," "serving," as one of the officers present put it, "with Active Spirit and uncommon Loyalty."<sup>2</sup>

Moreover he soon found other methods of displaying these qualities. The year 1777 saw the most elaborate preparations which Great Britain took to suppress the rebellion. The great movement to isolate New England was not properly worked out in detail, but it did include some appreciation of the importance of diverting the attention of the revolutionists by demonstrations along the coast-line, while the main columns operated inland. To the originators of the campaign "it was always clear in speculation that the Militia would never stay with Washington or quit their homes if the coast was kept in alarm."<sup>3</sup> Moreover it was necessary to clear the shores of the swarm of small privateers that infested the Gulf of Maine and played havoc with the Nova Scotia settlements and the communication between Halifax and New York.<sup>4</sup> Besides, there were rumours of a secret expedition fitting out at Boston in June, to attack the British fort at the mouth of the St. John's in the Bay of Fundy.<sup>5</sup> From Halifax, therefore, an expedition was arranged "to Saint John's River to meet the garrison of Fort Cumberland and to proceed to Machuas and destroy that nest of pirates, and afterwards to go to the east coast of New England towards Gouldsbury, to cause an alarm in favor of General Burgoyne"<sup>6</sup> The fleet operations were entrusted to Admiral Collier, and the troops were put under the command of John Small, the efficient organizer of the newly raised corps of Royal Highland Immigrants. For this expe-

<sup>1</sup> iv J Almon, *The Remembrancer*, 139

<sup>2</sup> Certificate of Major John Small, 8 March, 1778 Audit Office, Loyalist Series, Bundle 75, Public Record Office, London

<sup>3</sup> Knox to German, 31 October, 1778, vi Historical Manuscript Commission Reports, Various, 153.

<sup>4</sup> Cf iv J Almon, *The Remembrancer*, 139. E P Weaver, "Nova Scotia During the Revolution" x *American Historical Review*, 69, etc.

<sup>5</sup> F Kidder, *Military Operations in Eastern Maine*, 185.

<sup>6</sup> Massey to Howe, 26 November, 1777, i Historical Manuscripts Commission Reports, American Manuscripts, 156.

dition John Nutting's familiarity with the coast was of evident value, and, according to Small, he "did very chearfully and without any reward offer his Service as a Pilot or in any other way he could be of use for the Publick Service then carrying on;" and although "there was no pay allowed him on that Occasion," showed himself "a deserving good Subject, still ready & willing to exert himself as Such."<sup>1</sup>

Through no fault of his, however, the enterprise miscarried. The transports reached their destination with no errors in pilotage that we know of; but, in the words of the disgusted General Massey, commanding at Halifax, "after the Lieut. Governor and I had fix'd every appointment with good Guides at a great Expense for a Grand Stroke and while Major Small was prancing at St. John's River, the place of Rendezvous for the Troops from Cumberland and Windsor Sir George Collier stole out of Halifax, made a futile Attack at Machias, was most shamefully drove from thence . . . which prevented the Eastern Coast of New England from being Alarm'd which was my orders to Major Small, and which if they had been executed might have prevented the Misfortunes that attend'd Lt. Genl. Burgoyne's army, for it was at that critical time."<sup>2</sup> The jealous and self-sufficient Collier, after some gasconading up and down the coast, retired to St. John's in September, where in October the expedition disintegrated without accomplishing a single one of its objects.

Explanations to the home government were certainly needed, and whether Nutting was entrusted with them, or sent as a witness, or went on his own initiative, is not clear. At all events he sailed immediately for England, taking with him his son John, now a likely lad nearly ~~eight~~ years old. Arriving in the old country, which must have seemed so new to him, he at once sought out his former superiors, the ex-governor and ex-lieutenant-governor of Massachusetts, obtained written recommendations from them, dated 28 November, 1777, and drew up a memorial to Lord George Germain<sup>3</sup> This document, compared with the usual lugu-

fourteen

<sup>1</sup> See note 2, page 70.

<sup>2</sup> Massey to Howe Halifax, 15 March, 1778, i. Historical Manuscripts Commission Reports, American Manuscripts, 209

<sup>3</sup> All to be found in Audit Office, Loyalist Series, Bundle 75, Public Record Office, London

brious recitals of sufferings and insistent claims for compensation for the loss of fat fees or swollen salaries, with which the bulk of the loyalists flooded the government, is remarkably refreshing. After mentioning his undoubted services he states "That your Memorialist has no wish to be supported in Idleness at the Charge of Government, but is willing and desirous to be further serviceable in the way of his Trade; and as Carpenters are wanted at New York, & probably in other parts of America, he is come to England in Hopes of obtaining such employment. & will be very ready to go out immediately, — With this view your Memorialist humbly Solicits your Lordships patronage & for further Information respecting his Character, Services & Sufferings he begs leave to refer your Lordship to the Right Honorable Lord Percy to his Excellency General Gage, to Lieutenant Governor Oliver, and other Officers both Civil and Military to whom the foregoing Transactions are well known."

This memorial was promptly transmitted by William Knox, German's under-secretary, to John Robinson of the Treasury Board, who took equally prompt action upon it. It bears the endorsement: "Read 22 Dec. 77 £50 advance & to be recommended to the Com<sup>rs</sup> at New York." Such a substantial recognition of a man standing squarely on his own merits, in that heyday of influence and favoritism, shows better than any testimonials what manner of impression Mr. Nutting had already made in official circles.

The fifty pounds was paid, but the recommendation to New York must have been somehow overlooked; for on 28 February, 1778, Nutting addressed another memorial<sup>1</sup> to Lord George, from "78 Lambs Conduit Street," asking for further assistance, as he is still out of employment. This was transmitted by Knox to the Treasury Board on March 16, received April 20, and not read till July 8, it bears the chilly endorsement "Nil." Not waiting for this result, with real Yankee persistence, Nutting addressed, May 8, a personal letter<sup>2</sup> to Lord North himself, referring to the memorial, and proceeding: "I shall only presume to add, I desire not to eat the bread of Idleness, being able & willing to be em-

<sup>1</sup> Audit Office, Loyalist Series, Bundle 75, Public Record Office, London.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*



ployed, as formerly, in His Majesty's Service, where my Utility & perseverance is well known to the Generals, & Subordinate Officers that have served in America during the War — Many of whom are now in this Metropolis, & to whom I most gladly would Appeal." This direct application to the man "higher up" was successful, though not in quite the manner anticipated, and Nutting received from the Board of Ordnance the appointment of Overseer of His Majesty's works at Landguard Fort<sup>1</sup>

This post, on the outermost verge of the East Anglian coast, protecting the harbor of Harwich, the first considerable estuary north of the Thames, had long been considered of great importance. Just at this period, when war had recently been declared with Holland, it was receiving special attention. The marshy wastes beside it made an admirable proving ground for big guns, as well as an admirable location for a wholesomely impressive display of force. Accordingly from 1776 for a number of years extensive experiments were conducted there on a great many forms of ordnance shipped by water from Woolwich — experiments almost as instructive (though not as dangerous) to the Dutch luggers hovering off the coast as to the manipulators of untried types of the tricky cast-iron cannon of that day. The fort itself was neither as strong nor as commodious<sup>2</sup> as its importance warranted. During this time it was much enlarged, and also strengthened in flank and rear by a very elaborate system of defence works, under the direction of Lord Townshend, Master General of the Ordnance.<sup>3</sup> So extensive were these constructions that two overseers were required. Nutting, however, was the chief, receiving £91.5/- per annum, or five shillings a day, while John Jones, his assistant, had only £73.<sup>4</sup> As the additions included a number of new barracks, we may well believe that he felt quite in his element.

Yet he found time to show himself in town occasionally, and to

<sup>1</sup> Memorial to the Commissioners, heard at Halifax, 29 December, 1785. Audit Office, Loyalist Series, Bundle 51, Public Record Office, London.

<sup>2</sup> In 1777 its complete establishment was only 87 men, all told. *see* J Almon, Parliamentary Register, 185

<sup>3</sup> J H Leshe, History of Landguard Fort, 76 *et seq* One of the new redoubts was named the Raynham, after his Norfolk county-seat.

<sup>4</sup> *xvi.* J Almon, Parliamentary Register, 511

*x/*

cultivate his acquaintance with Knox. With this active and important official he was now on surprisingly intimate terms, whether from the favorable representations of others or from sheer native ability and address. One likes to think the latter, and to imagine the Cambridge carpenter haunting the office of the under-secretary with his petitions and memorials until he comes into notice by his energetic ways, coupled with that winning and persuasive manner that had served him in such good stead one night during the siege of Boston, in a boat on the Charles with four angry journeymen. At any rate, Nutting actually becomes a figure in the councils of the British Empire at one of its greatest crises — an adviser of generals and a *protégé* of lords, — under the following circumstances:

Knox had been from the first obsessed with the importance of planting a British force on the coast of Maine. Besides its effects<sup>1</sup> in distracting attention, a post there, he argued,<sup>1</sup> would give a station for the King's cruisers much nearer than Halifax, would cover the Bay of Fundy and Nova Scotia from molestation by sea, would prevent any land attack on what later became New Brunswick, and would even protect Lower Canada. Furthermore, it would form the nucleus and bulwark for a new province,<sup>2</sup> towards which might be directed the stream of refugees who were leaving the colonies and already driving the home government to distraction. He had even gone so far as to arrange the details for this modern Canaan. Lying between New England and "New Scotland," it was to be christened New Ireland,<sup>3</sup> perhaps in delicate reference to Knox's own nationality. Its governor was to be Thomas Hutchinson, its chief justice Daniel Leonard, its clerk of the council John Calef, the leading local tory, and its bishop (for *this* colony was to have a

<sup>1</sup> Knox to Cooke, Caling, 27 January, 1808 vi. Historical Manuscripts Commission Reports, Various, 227.

<sup>2</sup> The idea was not new. Even the original settlers were anxious, or were represented to be anxious, to have a government of their own, and Bernard fomented the proposition. But wiser heads would have none of it. J. Calef, *Siege of the Penobscot*, Postscript ii. Historical Manuscripts Commission, Dartmouth Papers, *passim*. Franklin to Cushing, London, 7 July, 1773 vi. B Franklin, *Writings* (ed. Smyth), 80.

<sup>3</sup> This was not the first effort toward the hibernization of Maine. In the previous generation Robert Temple had formed a brilliant but unsuccessful plan to settle an Irish colony near Bath. L. D. Temple, *Some Temple Pedigrees*, 6.

bishop willy-nilly) Dr. Henry Caner, formerly of King's Chapel, Boston. This "most preposterous measure," wrote Hutchinson from London,<sup>1</sup> "... is his own scheme, and few people here think well of it." Germain was at first among the disbelievers, but Knox finally "accomplished what he had been endeavouring" and brought his chief round to his opinion.

Then came the great question: Where should the post be located? Falmouth, Long Island, Townsend, Great Deer Island,—all were under discussion. Here John Nutting was called into the consultation. Mindful of his own "eligible" acres, and doubtless recognizing too the natural strength and strategic advantages<sup>2</sup> of the place (which events both past and future amply corroborated), with a fine mixture of self-interest and loyalty he suggested Penobscot. Yankee shrewdness and eloquence prevailed. His Majesty's ministers fell in with the suggestion,<sup>3</sup> and Nutting, "in consequence of pointing out Government (by Mr Knoxes desire) some places that might be taken advantageous to Government was on the 30th August, 1778, ordered from Landguard Fort to London by express to go out with despatches to America . . . from the Right Honorable Lord George Germain's office to Sir Henry Clinton at New York"<sup>4</sup> His special part in the enterprise was, as he announced openly at London, "to be employed as overseer of carpenters who are to rebuild the Fort at Penobscot,"<sup>5</sup> originally

<sup>1</sup> T. Hutchinson, *Diary*, 19 September, 1778, and 20 October, 1779. Hutchinson's name was soon dropped in this connection.

<sup>2</sup> "The harbor is spacious, accessible, and secure, none in the neighborhood can be compared with it. No country could afford greater supply of masts and spars for the Royal navy. Nor could any station afford equal convenience for annoying in time of war, yea, annihilating the commerce of New England" W. Ballard, "Castine, 1815" in *Bangor Historical Magazine*, 45.

<sup>3</sup> The current Boston explanation was that the failure of Massachusetts "to supply the eastern people [with food] as they had done during the war" had produced a disaffection which the local Tories had made the most of in persuading the inhabitants generally "to join in a petition to the enemy to come and take possession of the place." James Sullivan to John Sullivan, Boston, 30 August, 1779. in T. C. Amory, *Life of James Sullivan*, 376. The explanation suggests a certain guiltiness in the New England conscience.

<sup>4</sup> Memorial to the Treasury, "Rec'd 13 Mar 1781" Audit Office, *Loyalist Series*, Bundle 75, Public Record Office, London.

<sup>5</sup> T. Hutchinson, *Diary*, 3 September, 1778.



erected by the Sieur de Castine, and left in ruins when the French abandoned that-district in 1745.<sup>1</sup>

But in the execution of this ingenious method of protecting his cherished property "to the Eastward" an incidental divertissement of some magnitude awaited its author. Leaving John Jr. at school in London, and receiving his despatches dated at Whitehall 2 September, 1778,<sup>2</sup> he posted down to Falmouth and embarked, with £50 worth of "Sea Stock necessary for the Voyage" and "some valuable Books on Fortification & Architecture and Instruments,"<sup>3</sup> aboard the *Harriet*, one of the government mail packets.<sup>4</sup> A fortnight out, having got no farther than lat. 49° long. 22°, they were sighted by the brigantine *Vengeance*, American privateer, Wingate Newman of Newburyport master. He at once gave chase.<sup>5</sup> The *Harriet* was a fast sailer, as befitted her employment, but the Yankee was a larger ship, specially fitted for her business, and brand new to boot. After a six hours' pursuit Newman got within range and opened fire. Sampson Sprague, commander of the packet, replied gallantly, but his little three-pounders and crew of forty-five were no match for the six-pounders and the hundred men of the privateer. Within pistol-shot the lat-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. G. A. Wheeler, History of Castine. J. Williamson, History of Maine, etc.

<sup>2</sup> i. Historical Manuscripts Commission Reports, American Manuscripts, 284.

<sup>3</sup> Account annexed to memorial to Treasury, "Rec'd 13 Mar. 1781." Audit Office, Loyalist Series, Bundle 75, Public Record Office, London.

<sup>4</sup> This craft had quite a prominent part in the transport and mail service. She is frequently mentioned in contemporary documents.

<sup>5</sup> 17 September, 1778. Members of both ships' companies have left accounts of this affair. For the American, see Journal of Samuel Nye, Surgeon of the *Vengeance*, E. V. Smith, History of Newburyport, 116: for the English, see affidavit of Ab'm Forst, Halifax, 15 January, 1784. Audit Office, Loyalist Series, Bundle 51, Public Record Office, London. I suspect this Forst, like Rust, was one of Nutting's loyal apprentices who followed his master's fortunes. If we can twist the name into Abraham Frost, we not only have the Cambridge man, born 1754, enumerated by L. R. Paige, History of Cambridge, 554-555, but also have an explanation why "this fam. prob. rem. as no further trace of them is found." For other details of the capture of the *Harriet*, see i. J. J. Currier, History of Newburyport, Mass., 629. London Chronicle, 22-24 October, 1778: E. S. Maclay, History of American Privateers, 117. C. H. Lincoln, Naval Records of the American Revolution, 113. + State Papers Do-

mestic Entry Books 143, p. 155. Colonial Office Papers 136 (3 entries) Do. 141.

ter threw in a broadside that obliged the *Harriet* to strike, having one man killed and six wounded. Among the latter was Nutting, whom we can well imagine in the very thick of the fight, for he was hit "in four places"<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless he managed to sink his despatches, which he "declared were of great consequence to him," as indeed they were. The mails also were thrown overboard just in time. The *Harriet's* people were taken aboard the *Vengeance*, stripped of their effects, and landed at Corunna,<sup>2</sup> the nearest point on the Spanish coast, but a most unusual prize port. By an agreement<sup>3</sup> between the British Consul there and Captain Newman the prisoners were exchanged and allowed to pass unmolested to England again. In about six weeks Nutting accordingly arrived at Falmouth once more (fare twelve guineas), having lost £120 worth of personal outfit, and being put to an expense of £20 for surgeons, nurses and medical attendance, and wended his way by postchaise (fare £15) back to London.<sup>4</sup> It was now too late in the season to do anything more about New Ireland. Even Knox, its sponsor, wrote: "Poor Nutting and the Penobscott orders have missed their way for this year, and I fear something will happen to prevent our taking possession of that country in the spring"<sup>5</sup>

All the same, he determined to have another try at his plan, and to have it early and by the same hands. In the beginning of January, 1779, Mr. Nutting received a fresh set of despatches, and was "ordered out again to America the second time before his Wounds

<sup>1</sup> Claimant's evidence before the Commissioners, Halifax, 29 December, 1785. xiii. American Loyalists Transcripts, 298. Public Library, New York City.

<sup>2</sup> It is a strange freak that makes John Nutting's wanderings intersect the military termini of Sir John Moore, who entered active service at Penobscot and left it at Corunna. British Plutarch, 243

<sup>3</sup> 1 October, 1778. i. Historical Manuscripts Commission Reports, American Manuscripts, 307. It is a family tradition that Nutting's high rank in Freemasonry procured his "escape" from a Spanish prison. W. F. Parker, Life of Daniel McNeill Parker, 12. But while this advantage may account for various other fortunate turns in his history, it does not need to be invoked here

<sup>4</sup> Account of Expenses annexed to memorial to the Treasury, "Rec'd 13 Mar 1781." Audit Office, Loyalist Series, Bundle 75, Public Record Office, London

<sup>5</sup> Knox to German. Bath, 31 October, 1778. vi. Historical Manuscripts Commission Report, Various, 153-4

were well, experiencing a long and tedious Passage of ffourteen Weeks to New York, on the *Grampus* ship of war"<sup>1</sup> (this time taking a safer conveyance). Clinton had by now got general intimations of the plan, and some correspondence<sup>2</sup> had passed between him and General McLean; the new commander at Halifax, on the subject. McLean was personally ignorant<sup>3</sup> of the shore-line, and had been consulting Captain Mowatt, his naval officer. The latter recommended taking post at Falmouth, the scene of his most notorious exploit, to which he doubtless longed to give the finishing touches. Detailed instructions, however, were brought by Nutting, and Clinton, by orders dated 13 April,<sup>4</sup> directed McLean to proceed and fortify a post on Penobscot River, — rather to the disappointment of all the officers concerned.

McLean seems to have put full confidence in the "cheerful Pilot," and prompt preparations were made. On May 16th the detachment was reported ready. At the end of that month the transports sailed, covered by Mowatt and a few inefficient men-of-war. In the middle of June the fleet came up Penobscot Bay, and after several days' general reconnoissance cast anchor off the little peninsula that ever since 1506 had been a recognized strategic centre round which an almost continuous struggle for supremacy had revolved.<sup>5</sup>

On the 26th the landing began, the troops looking about them "as frightened as a flock of sheep,"<sup>6</sup> and John Nutting doubtless hastened to inspect his farm, woodland, and mill, now to be so handsomely protected against possible rebel molestation. Yet he could give little time to his private affairs just then, for the mil-

<sup>1</sup> Memorial to the Treasury, "Rec'd 13 Mar. 1781." Audit Office, Loyalist Series, Bundle 75, Public Record Office, London.

<sup>2</sup> i. Historical Manuscripts Commission Reports, American Manuscripts, 381, 393, etc.

<sup>3</sup> This ignorance was merely practical, for the magnificent series of charts by Des Barres had already been published.

<sup>4</sup> i. Historical Manuscripts Commission Reports, American Manuscripts, 415. See also 436, 458, etc., for many of the following details.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. G. F. Clark, "Military Operations at Castine," Worcester Society of Antiquity, Proceedings for 1889, 18 — a good general account of all the martial doings there, including a far earlier attack and repulse of the Massachusetts forces.

<sup>6</sup> "Hutchings's Narrative." G. A. Wheeler, History of Castine, 322.

② Cf. Colonial Office Papers, Class 5, vol. 156: J.

on 11. 1. 1781 [? Correspondence] no. 11. 1. 1781



itary position must be made good at once. "The Provisions, Artillery and Engineer Stores and the equipage of the troops, being landed on the Beach, must be carried to the Ground of the fort chiefly by the labor of the men against the ascent, there being only a Couple of small teams to Assist in it. The ground & all the Avenues to it, was to be examined, cleared from wood, and at the same time guarded. Materials were to be collected & prepared, And the defences, as well as every convenience of the fort, were to be reared."<sup>1</sup> The ruins of the French fort were apparently disregarded, and an entirely new one was laid out. The official engineer was Captain Hartcup;<sup>2</sup> but his plans proved defective and had to be altered, probably by the master-carpenter. There were other delays too, and it was July 2d before the lines were actually staked and work begun.<sup>3</sup> The local inhabitants were divided in their attitude, as everywhere else. Some stoutly proclaimed their adherence to the United States of America, and when approached with the oath of allegiance made good their words by packing their scanty possessions and departing into the backwoods. Others to the number of a hundred showed their willingness by assisting to clear the ground round the fort, etc. A simple rectangular structure of logs and earthwork two hundred feet on a side<sup>4</sup> with corner bastions and a central blockhouse was laid out, a "shade" erected for the provisions, the powder "lodged in covered holes dug in the proposed glacis," a ditch cut across the isthmus, and the work pushed forward with a will.

The expected attack was not long in coming. Of the consternation and indignation of Massachusetts at this invasion of her territory, of the feverish fitting-out of the Penobscot Expedition, "by far the largest naval undertaking of the Revolution made by the Americans," there is no need to tell here in detail. Well

<sup>1</sup> Mowatt's "Relation," *Magazine of History*, Extra Number 11 (1910), 49

<sup>2</sup> Elsewhere spelled, and doubtless pronounced, Harcup. In like manner Mowatt becomes Moat, and Calef masquerades as Calf. Rather oddly, Hartcup's next assignment was to Landguard Fort. 1 W. Porter, *History of the Corps of Royal Engineers*, 215

<sup>3</sup> McLean to Clinton, Camp at Majebigwaduce, 23 August, 1779. 11 Historical Manuscripts Commission Reports, *American Manuscripts*, 14

<sup>4</sup> This was the inside measurement. That mentioned by B. Hild — 14 perches (= 231 feet) — was evidently the measurement outside the glacis

when Admiral Collier again appeared upon the scene

known too is the story of the arrival of that formidable Yankee fleet off the little peninsula before the fort was half completed, the extraordinary indecision of the ensuing siege, and its shameful termination, "Rarely has a more ignominious military operation been made by Americans. Had it been successful, it would not have been worth the effort it cost. Its object had no national significance; it was an eccentric operation. Bad in conception, bad in preparation, bad in execution, it naturally ended in disaster and disgrace."<sup>1</sup> "A prodigious wreck of property, a due eclipse of reputation, and universal chagrin were the fruits of this expedition, in the promotion of which there had been such an exalted display of public spirit both by government and individuals."<sup>2</sup> Among the twenty transports destroyed was the whole trading fleet of the State. Destroyed also were thirteen privateers, temporarily taken into the State service. Among these was the *Vengeance*, then in command of Captain Thomas, and though the phrase "poetic justice" may not have been known to Mr. Nutting, the sight of his old captor blazing and crackling on the Penobscot flats must have been the sweetest moment of the campaign to her ex-prisoner.<sup>3</sup>

Concerned as we are with but one figure in the story, we must admit that the master-carpenter all this time seems to have lain extremely low. Indeed, for the only time in his history it is recorded that his workmen did not "pay proper attention" to him. We get one glimpse of him accompanying a party sent for lumber up the Bagaduce River, perhaps to his own wood-lot.<sup>4</sup> But his

<sup>1</sup> C O Paulin, *The Navy of the American Revolution*, 347, 352.

<sup>2</sup> H J Williamson, *History of Maine*, 476. In the opinion of well-informed British officers taking part in this affair the results strikingly justified many of Knox's theories. "The attack on Penobscot . . . was positively the severest blow received by the American Naval force during the War. The trade to Canada, which was intended, after the expected reduction of the Post of Penobscot, to be intercepted by this very armament, went safe that Season. The New England Provinces did not for the remaining period of the contest recover the loss of Ships, and the Expence of fitting out the Expedition. Every thought of attempting Canada, & Nova Scotia, was thenceforth laid aside, and the trade & Transports from the Banks of Newfoundland along the Coast of Nova Scotia, &c. enjoyed unusual Security." Captain Henry Mowatt's "Relation," *Magazine of History*, Extra Number 11 (1910), 53.

<sup>3</sup> E S MacLay, *History of American Privateers*, 118.

<sup>4</sup> *Orderly Book of William Lawrence, Sergeant Royal Artillery*, July 17,

peculiarly personal interest in the occupation and defence of the place had of course transpired, and when during the siege things seemed almost hopeless for His Majesty's forces<sup>1</sup> his situation was one demanding as much self-effacement as his nature was capable of. In a subsequent enumeration of his sufferings at Penobscot he mentions not only "enduring a Siege of Twenty Days, the fatigues of establishing a New Fort," but also "the part he had to act, and the reflexions thrown out against him by numbers of the officers when they were informed your Memorialist was the cause of their being carried there, under an idea that he had sold them to the Rebels, with the anxiety that must attend him, is more sensibly felt than expressed."<sup>2</sup> His attitude even partook of duplicity. Admiral Collier wrote to General Clinton, August 24, 1779, after the smoke of battle had somewhat cleared away, expressing his strong disapprobation of establishing a post at this dreary rebellious place, and adding: "That fellow Nutting whom yr. Exc'y remembers at New York has just been with me on a message; I asked him what could possibly induce him to recommend the establishing a settlement in such a place, & what advantages might be expected from it? He denied his having ever recommended the measure to Lord G. Germain, nor could I learn from him what particular benefits would accrue to us, by keeping possession of so infernal a spot."<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, the value of Nutting's aid was officially and handsomely recognized. McLean certified that he "served under my

1779, and August 30. v Bangor Historical Magazine, 146 *et seq* A typical smack of the region is given in the disagreeable orders for September 17, that the commissary must thereafter "deliver out rice in lieu of pies"

<sup>1</sup> When the provincials effected their first landing on the peninsula, McLean was so sure all was up that he stood by the flagstaff halldards himself, ready to strike his colors "Hutchings's Narrative" G. A. Wheeler, History of Castine, 323. Cf a lacy latter from E. Hazard, Jamaica Plain, 22 March, 1780. 17 Massachusetts Historical Society Proceedings, 129

<sup>2</sup> Memorial to the Treasury, "Rec'd 13 Mar 1781" Audit Office, Loyalist Series, Bundle 75, Public Record Office, London

<sup>3</sup> 11 Historical Manuscripts Commission Reports, American Manuscripts, 18 In his more self-assertive and characteristic moments he made no bones of claiming, in true carpenter's spelling, that "that Expedition was planed at his Recommendation" Testimony before the Commissioners 1111 American Loyalists Transcripts, 298 Public Library, New York City



Command on the Expedition to Penobscot much to my satisfaction, on my taking post there I appointed him Overseer of Works, which duty he performed with Zeal and fidelity to the King's service" <sup>1</sup> General Campbell, who was left in command of the place, "in consideration of his Attachment to His Majesty's Government," made a "Gratuitous Grant" to Mrs. Nutting of "a lot of Land to settle upon . . . on the N E Side of y<sup>e</sup> Road Leading to Fort George, formerly the Property of Joseph Pukins now in Rebellion." <sup>2</sup> As it was evident that he could not return to Cambridge, the Overseer seems to have regarded this lot in the light of a homestead; upon it he built a house which he valued at £150.

The success of this little invasion was quite extraordinary <sup>3</sup> It was so dwelt upon by the British, who had not overmuch in that line to offer, that it drew the satire of Horace Walpole on the "destruction of a whole navy of walnut shells at a place as well known as Phaisalia called Penobscot," <sup>4</sup> and sundry ingenious gentlemen came forward to share the honor of its authorship or to offer suggestions for improving on the situation. <sup>5</sup> It was a bitter pill for the pride of the old Bay State, and the fiasco which had permitted it to continue was as a draught of wormwood to wash it down withal. Baffled and resourceless, the Massachusetts Council bethought themselves of the great provincial panacea, and rushed blindly for aid to the one man who never lost his head. Washington in a stern letter, dated 17 April, 1780, pointed out the impossibility of any successful recapture of the place in the then desperate circumstances of the whole military establishment. No troops could be spared except the militia, who, he cuttingly observed, if defeated,

<sup>1</sup> Certificate, Halifax, 16 May, 1780. Audit Office, Loyalist Series, Bundle 75, Public Record Office, London

<sup>2</sup> Fort George, Penobscot, 21 June, 1781. Audit Office, Loyalist Series, Bundle 51, Public Record Office, London

<sup>3</sup> Cf. T. Jones, *New York during the Revolution*, 297.

<sup>4</sup> Walpole to Countess of Ossory, 24 September, 1779

<sup>5</sup> The domineering Col. Thomas Goldthwait hastened to New York to offer his services to Clinton in raising a regiment to defend the post. ii. *Historical Manuscripts Commission Reports*, *American Manuscripts*, 20, 45. He wrote to Admiral Arbuthnot to the same effect. iii. *H. M. C. R.*, Stopford-Sackville Papers, 149. Strange to say, he too owned extensive tracts in the vicinity. ix. *Maine Historical Magazine*, 23

would "escape with difficulty, no doubt with disgrace" Nor, he reminded them, could such an attempt be made without a naval force, the total lack of which (thanks to themselves, he might have added) was fast becoming a fatal defect on the American side <sup>1</sup>

Luckily for the republicans that indispensable factor was soon supplied by their French allies. During the spring of 1781, while the British fleet was busy in the Chesapeake and the French squadron idle at Newport, the Massachusetts men saw a golden opportunity. Their proposals were favorably received by Destouches, who agreed to furnish five vessels, while Rochambeau was to supply six hundred infantry, for an attack on Penobscot. Massachusetts was to contribute a force of militia, but broke down; and Washington quietly advised Rochambeau to put no trust in this part of the agreement, but to proceed himself as speedily and secretly as possible. After much preparation Destouches decided that the naval risk was too great, and all was abandoned <sup>2</sup>

Yet the instinct of Massachusetts was that of the she-bear robbed of her cub. The next summer Vaudreuil anchored his great fleet in Nantasket Roads, and Governor Hancock appealed to him to strike a *coup de main* at "that troublesome post" whither John Nutting had led the King's troops. The admiral seemed to approve, and the governor made some preparations on his own account. But the general of the allies disapproved, and Washington supported his view. Thus for the fourth time was Massachusetts foiled in her attempt to regain the conquered portion of her own territory <sup>3</sup>

Still, regularly as the year came round, the thoughts of the Bay State turned to Penobscot. On 8 February, 1783, the Legislature addressed a letter to Washington on the same old subject, "a post too beneficial to them and too dangerous to the safety of this and the other states in the Union to suffer us to remain indifferent, passive observers of their measures." With a doubtful regard for historical accuracy, the writers represented that since the defeat of the State expedition "our whole attention from that period to the present has been drawn from our own and fixed on the more

<sup>1</sup> Washington to President of Congress, 17 April, 1780

<sup>2</sup> Washington to Rochambeau, 10 April, 1781. Cf. viii J Sparks, Writings of Washington, 10, note

<sup>3</sup> Washington to Hancock, 10 August, 1782.

dangerous and distressed situation" of the more southern colonies, but "that as the enemy have now left the southern states, and as there is no particular object that seems to engage the attention of the army," it would be a good time to send enough regiments "to dispossess the enemy or at least such a number as will confine them to their present possessions," as "we are apprehensive that they will in the spring take possession of the river Kennebeck"<sup>1</sup>

Washington patiently replied that if peace was soon declared there would be no need of further attention to Penobscot, but if not, all efforts must be concentrated in a final attack on New York. And Massachusetts had to rest content with his suggestive statement that he should always be ready to concur in any "judicious" plan for retaking the eastern frontiers, "a territory whose utility is very deeply impressed upon me."<sup>2</sup>

Amidst these wars and rumours of wars the garrison at Penobscot were constantly on the alert. They continued their defensive works until "the viperine nest,"<sup>3</sup> as the patriots feelingly termed it, was reported to be "the most regularly constructed and best finished of any in America."<sup>4</sup> Frequent forays were made into the surrounding settlements, and not a few distinguished Sons of Liberty were temporarily deprived of their birthright and placed in durance vile at the central blockhouse.<sup>5</sup> Several of these energetic gentry, however, contrived to penetrate Mr. Nutting's handiwork and depart in peace, if not with honor. Use also was made of the excellent harbor. The naval force was constantly changing. Vessels of war, transports, victuallers, privateers, and their prizes,

<sup>1</sup> Massachusetts Archives, 44 "Court Records," 304.

<sup>2</sup> Head Quarters, Newburgh, 22 Feb 1783. Massachusetts Archives, "Letters, 1780-1783," 136.

<sup>3</sup> Maine Historical Society Collections and Proceedings, 2d Series, 397.

<sup>4</sup> Washington to Vaudreuil, 10 August, 1782.

<sup>5</sup> Among them, General Cushing, of Pownalboro, General Wadsworth, of Thomaston, Daniel, brother of General Sullivan, etc. See Calef, Wheeler, Williamson, etc. It is an instructive example of the astounding distortion of the average American "history," to note the shrieks of protest against the *inhumanities* and *outrages* practised by the British — how Mowatt once threatened a rebellious native with his sword etc. — while brutalities of the Colonials, like Wadsworth's summary hanging of a miserable half-witted toy guide, are passed over in silence, or condoned as unfortunate necessities of war.



made the scene busy and occasionally exciting, as when the dashing Preble, in a night attack, cut out an English brig lying close to shore and escaped without a scratch,<sup>1</sup> or Capt. George Little, by a daring stratagem, accomplished a similar feat.<sup>2</sup>

During this period many loyalists removed to this haven of refuge, and a sort of New Ireland *de facto* began to take shape. By the end of the war the settlement had grown from half a dozen huts to thirty-seven houses, some of two stories, with wharves, stores, etc., all the product of loyal hands.<sup>3</sup> Another petition was sent to England asking to have the separate government established.<sup>4</sup> The authority of Massachusetts, despite her asseverations, was so thoroughly broken that "no place eastward of Penobscot was called upon for taxes or contributions after this [expedition] till the close of the war"; although this exemption was carefully explained as due to tender consideration of the sufferings the inhabitants underwent from the British.<sup>5</sup>

In brief, then, futile as the original idea may have been in theory, in practice the occupation of Penobscot had turned out a surprising success; Knox, with some show of reason, plumed himself upon "my plan" and its results.<sup>6</sup>

And how fared John Nutting, the humble *causa causans* of it all? During the winter and spring of 1779-80 he seems to have been pretty well occupied with the care of his own and his Majesty's property at Castine. His wife had joined him there soon after the siege, and there little Sophia Elizabeth was born, 23 September, 1780.<sup>7</sup> But farming and small garrison work were too tame

<sup>1</sup> J. Williamson, "British Occupation of Penobscot" i. Maine Historical Society Collections and Proceedings, 2d Series, 395.

<sup>2</sup> "Hutchings's Narrative." G. A. Wheeler, History of Castine, 327 i. C. Eaton, History of Thomaston, Maine, 134. Cf. payment of 24 May, 1781, "To Lieut Col Archibald Campbell of the 71st foot, for the losses sustained by the George transport being taken by the rebels £39 18 = " xxiv J. Almon, Parliamentary Register, 639. From the same source we learn that £21 was considered sufficient remuneration "to Capt Alexander Campbell of the 74th foot for the cure of his thigh, which was broke at Penobscott, in June, 1779."

<sup>3</sup> 145 Massachusetts Archives, 377

<sup>4</sup> J. Calef, Siege of the Penobscot, 40

<sup>5</sup> 11 J. Williamson, History of Maine, 481, note

<sup>6</sup> 11 W. Knox, Extra-Official State Papers, 60

<sup>7</sup> Nutting Papers. She married Michael B. Grant, 10 July, 1800, and bore him eight children ere his death in 1817. She herself died in 1862.

for our budding strategist, and encouraged by the local sentiment he began to nurse the idea of repeating his former success with the ministry. General McLean also had theories of his own for the military dispositions along the Maine coast; between the two, if appearances are to be trusted, another scheme was hatched for the favorable consideration of Mr Knox. At least, in the spring of 1780, Nutting, "by the General's particular advice and recommendation, Embarked again for England,"<sup>1</sup> where he soon announced that he had "laid a Plan before the Right Honourable Lord George Germain which if put into Execution he is clear would be of the greatest Utility to Government"<sup>2</sup>

The details of that plan do not appear. We may have an echo of it in the insistence with which Germain the next winter urged upon Clinton the ministry's favorite scheme for the disposition of the throngs of Tories at New York: "Many . . . are desirous of being settled in the country about Penobscot . . . and, as it is proposed to settle that country, and this appears a cheap method of disposing of these loyalists, it is wished you would encourage them to go there under the protection of the Associated Refugees, and assure them that a civil government will follow them in due time; for I hope, in the course of the summer, the admiral and you will be able to spare a force sufficient to effect an establishment at Casco Bay, and reduce that country to the King's obedience."<sup>3</sup> At all events the imminence of this projected attack on Portland was sufficient to cause some very earnest preparations to be made by the inhabitants there.<sup>4</sup>

It may have been only a coincidence, but soon after Nutting's arrival in London an astonishing impetus was given to the whole New Ireland scheme. Germain wrote to Knox, 7 August, 1780: "I hope *New Ireland* continues to employ your thoughts: the

<sup>1</sup> Memorial to the Commissioners, heard at Halifax, 29 December, 1785. Audit Office, Loyalist Series, Bundle 51, Public Record Office, London.

<sup>2</sup> Memorial to the Treasury, "Rec'd 13 Mar 1781." Audit Office, Loyalist Series, Bundle 75, Public Record Office, London

<sup>3</sup> Whitehall, 7 March, 1781 (intercepted). viii. J. Sparks, Writings of Washington, 521

<sup>4</sup> Campbell to Clinton, Ft George, Penobscot, 15 March, 1781. ii. Historical Manuscripts Commission Reports, American Manuscripts, 258 Cf ii J Williamson, History of Maine, 481, etc

more I think of Oliver (Chief Justice of Massachusetts Bay), for governor, the more I like him. . . . I wish we might prepare some plan for the consideration of the Cabinet."<sup>1</sup> A hint was enough for Knox, and with suspicious speed the plan was produced. Four days later a full-blown constitution for the new province was a reality,<sup>2</sup> and Germain wrote: "*The King approves of the plan . . . likes Oliver for Governor, so it may be offered him. He approves of Leonard for Chief Justice.*"<sup>3</sup> Yet here a most provoking obstacle arose. Wedderburn, the Attorney-General, in a pet, according to the disgruntled Knox,<sup>4</sup> at seeing his legal rival, Lord Thurlow, raised to the peerage before himself,<sup>5</sup> refused to sanction the proposition, declaring that no new province could be interposed between two old ones whose charters gave them a coterminous boundary. ☉

Whether Nutting had much or little to do with all this, he reached England unfortunately "at the time of the Riots in London,"<sup>6</sup> was detained contrary to his expectation, and received a peremptory order from Lord Townsend to proceed immediately to Landguard Fort. His Lordship being pleased to declare that Your Memorialist could not be spared out of the Kingdom at that time."<sup>7</sup> Work at Landguard was then in full swing, as the English coast towns were not only threatened by the Dutch and Spanish fleets but still sweating from the fear of that boggy-man of the sea, John P. Jones.

Thus side-tracked among the East Anglian marshes, his finances being again very low, "having expended the whole of his pay, and

<sup>1</sup> W Knox, Extra-Official State Papers ii Appendix, 82

<sup>2</sup> Discussed and compared in x G Bancroft, History of the United States, 368

<sup>3</sup> W Knox, Extra-Official State Papers, ii Appendix, 83

<sup>4</sup> Knox to Cooke, Ealing, 27 January, 1808. vi. Historical Manuscripts Commission Reports, Various, 228

<sup>5</sup> This explanation seems a bit tenuous. The invidious promotion had been made over two years before, and Wedderburn was himself by this time safely within the charmed circle as Baron Loughborough. Still, there were doubtless wheels within wheels.

<sup>6</sup> The Gordon Riots began 2 June, 1780

<sup>7</sup> Memorial to the Commissioners, heard 29 December, 1785. Audit Office, Loyalist Series, Bundle 51. Public Record Office, London

☉ Cf. Andrews's *Guide to State Papers*, vol. I,



being considerably more indebted than when he set out which he is wholly unable to pay although he has used the greatest Oeconomy, not being able to return a Compliment of asking a Friend to Dinner," Nutting composed a memorial<sup>1</sup> to the Treasury Board, asking for reimbursement for £394 worth of expenses incurred since leaving Landguard in 1778, "with such other gratuity, as your Lordships shall think fit." This he followed up by a straightforward letter<sup>2</sup> to Robinson, Secretary of the Treasury, who it appears had made a "kind promise to speak to My Lord North" in his behalf. Herein he begs for "one hundred or even seventy pounds" which "would set me free from that anxiety of mind every honest man ought to have to pay his Just debts though incurred for the service of Government." He refers for his "carecure, & services," to "the Rt. Hon'ble Lord Germain, or Mr. Knox; to whom I have the honour to be well known." He was evidently determined that the family orthography should improve, for he adds a "P. P. (*sic*) the bearer is my son who is at school in London, & shall wait on your honour when most convenient, for an answer."

That "answer" was long in coming. The frightfully overburdened treasury did not reach action on this appeal till a year and a half later. Then, after various wanderings in the official maze, it was returned to "Sir" Grey Cooper, the new Secretary of the Treasury, by the ever-friendly Knox, with the statement that "£300 is judged a proper compensation for Mr. Nutting's extraordinary expenses"<sup>3</sup>. This sum the Treasury would consent to pay only on *receiving back* the £150 already allowed Nutting as an American sufferer, "to be applied again to the payment of American sufferers."<sup>4</sup>

Ere this the ministry had changed and Nutting's old patrons were no longer in power. But he had already secured new ones — among them the Duke of Richmond, Master General of Ordnance. By that dignitary, soon after his exchequer had received the above addition,

<sup>1</sup> Endorsed "Rec'd 13 Mar. 1781" Audit Office, Loyalist Series, Bundle 75, Public Record Office, London

<sup>2</sup> Landguard Fort, 5 October, 1780 *Ibidem*.

<sup>3</sup> Knox to Cooper, Whitehall, 14 March, 1782 *Ibidem*.

<sup>4</sup> Endorsements on above memorial

and "as soon as the disturbances subsided," he was appointed engineer,<sup>1</sup> and was once again ordered out to New York, taking John Junior with him, "to follow such Directions as he might receive from His Excellency Sir Guy Carleton."<sup>2</sup> His arrival is chronicled in a letter from Carleton to his Grace dated 17 November, 1782: "Mr. Nutting and his son, whom Your Grace mentioned to me, are arrived here. I shall immediately employ the father according to his wish at Penobscot (*sic*), and as soon as an opportunity offers, provide for the son who I have in the meantime directed shall serve under the Chief Engineer, who will take care of him."<sup>3</sup> The commander-in-chief acted with a promptness that shows how much "influence" was behind the Cambridge man. A few days later his pecuniary cloud showed a further silver lining in the shape of a payment of another £100 "for services to Government";<sup>4</sup> and on 1 December, young John was satisfactorily provided for, by an appointment as Second Lieutenant in the Royal Artillery.<sup>5</sup>

Nutting's wish to be employed at Penobscot was quite understandable, but more serious matters were afoot, matters too in which he was specially qualified to assist. Carleton was facing the question of what to do with the loyalists. For years they had been concentrating on New York, which on their account was actually held by the British beyond the intended date of surrender.<sup>6</sup> The humane general was doing all he could temporarily for the thousands of unfortunates, but the only possible solution of the problem of their final disposal was to send them to the province still loyal like them-

<sup>1</sup> So at least he says in his memorial to the Commissioners, heard 29 December, 1785. Probably a "practitioner engineer," a rank then just going out of use. Cf. i W. Porter, *History of the Royal Engineers*, 202. The family tradition is that he was a captain in that corps, but his name is not found under that heading in the Army Lists and the title is probably confused with his son's. At all events, he seems to have soon quit the job. See *post*.

<sup>2</sup> Memorial above, Audit Office, Loyalist Series, Bundle 51, Public Record Office, London.

<sup>3</sup> *in* Historical Manuscripts Commission, *American Manuscripts*, 226.

<sup>4</sup> 22 November, 1782. *Idem*, 231.

<sup>5</sup> Army Lists. He at first appears as James Nutting, by an obvious error. 24 March, 1791, he was promoted First Lieutenant, and 1 October, 1795, "Captain Lieutenant and Captain." He apparently sold out in 1797.

<sup>6</sup> *in* R. Hildreth, *History of the United States*, 439.

selves to the king.<sup>1</sup> The movement to deport them to Nova Scotia began in the autumn of 1782. It soon reached proportions really alarming: during the ensuing twelvemonth nearly 30,000 souls were estimated to have arrived at Halifax, Annapolis, Port Roseway, St. John's, etc.<sup>2</sup> The first requisite for these poor exiles was shelter. "They have applied to me," wrote Governor Parr, "to be provided with a Sufficiency of Boards for Erecting small houses to put them under Shelter after their arrival, as such a Provision is indispensably necessary & out of their power to make."<sup>3</sup> In his next letter he speaks of the great want of working people. This scarcity of boards<sup>4</sup> and building material is mentioned in almost every one of Parr's letters home during 1783. "Another very Considerable Article of Expence My Lord will be the Lumber purchased from the Unavoidable Necessity of Providing these people with some Kind of Shelter & Habitation; for although they might in some Degree have provided themselves with Materials from the Woods yet without some Allowance of Boards their Dwellings would be Wretched & Miserable, I cannot Ascertain the Expence already incurr'd on this Account, but from what is Known it amounts to about £3500."<sup>5</sup>

Here, in short, was the same old field ripe again for John Nutting's best-known talents, and he very soon found himself ordered to report at Halifax once more.<sup>6</sup> The conditions were curiously like those he had faced in 1776. There was the same uncertainty

<sup>1</sup> Little could these poor refugees foresee that by their very exile they were to perform a still incalculable service to their sovereign and his successors. It is now reckoned that nothing but the vast increase they gave to the population and prestige of Nova Scotia induced the ministry to consider retaining that despised remnant of the American possessions, — yet the nucleus of the present Dominion of Canada! E. P. Weaver, "Nova Scotia during the Revolution" x. *American Historical Review*, 71.

<sup>2</sup> Parr to North, Halifax, 20 November, 1783. 47 Provincial Archives, Halifax.

<sup>3</sup> Parr to Townshend, Halifax, 15 January, 1783. *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Some of the loyalists before leaving for Halifax "even tore down their houses to take the material to the wilderness for new homes." A. C. Flick, *Loyalism in New York during the American Revolution*, 188.

<sup>5</sup> Parr to North, Halifax, 21 October, 1783. 47 Provincial Archives, Halifax.

<sup>6</sup> Memorial to the Commissioners, heard at Halifax, 29 December, 1785. Audit Office, Loyalist Series, Bundle 51, Public Record Office, London.



and confusion, the same lack of supplies, the same wintry distress for the same class of true-hearted, tenderly-nurtured refugees, many of them fresh from the warm southern colonies. "It is a most unlucky Season for these unfortunate people to come to this Climate," remarks Parr in November. And a little later, "I cannot better describe the Wretched Situation of those people, than by inclosing your Lordship a list of those Just arrived in the Clinton Transport, destitute of almost everything Chiefly Women & Children all still on board, as I have not yet been Able to find any Sort of place for them & the Cold Setting in Severe."<sup>1</sup>

We must therefore again picture the master carpenter struggling to procure workmen and materials for the "indispensable" little huts into which the poor refugees were only too thankful to crowd themselves. Much of his work must have been of a supervisory and instructive sort — helping the new settlers to help themselves, explaining the mysteries of saw and hammer to the former aristocrats of New York and Philadelphia, illustrating the theory of framing to the mob-harmed ex-officials, broken professional men, and ruined merchant princes of that dolorous company. For there was now one great difference from the conditions of seven years before. This time nothing lay beyond. Halifax was not a mere point of transshipment, but a terminus; it was all too certain that there would and could be no return, the new arrivals were to become permanent settlers to live and die in the Nova Scotia wilderness.

For this reason the allotment of regular lands to the loyalists was another necessity, and a considerable force of surveyors pushed out into the forests and barrens of the back country, followed as fast as possible by the wretched army of grantees. Nutting must have made many a journey to the new settlements to assist in the house-building problems there. When it came to his own allotment the persuasive Yankee land-speculator drove his usual good bargain. Whether from the representations of his influential patrons at home, or from his own importance in the community, he<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Parr to North, Halifax, 15 January, 1784, 47 Provincial Archives, Halifax.

<sup>2</sup> Warrant dated 7 September, 1783 14 Crown Grants, 3 Crown Grants Office, Halifax. The exact location, close to the 1000 acres of "Commissary Roger Johnston," is shown on an ancient traced map in the office, marked "Avon River to Tinney Cape." It was a long narrow strip running back from the water, to give the advantages of both upland and foreshore.

received a large tract, 2,000 acres,<sup>1</sup> of the rich soil on the southern shore of the beautiful Basin of Minas, near the present town of Newport, and conveniently close to Halifax itself, the provincial metropolis, "yielding & paying to His Majesty . . . a free yearly quit rent of one farthing per Acre."

He did not at once remove to this domain, however, still being busy with his government work. About this time, according to family traditions,<sup>2</sup> he was constructing at Halifax the "Old Chain Battery" near the entrance of the Northwest Arm of the harbor. This, with the chain-boom which it commanded, stretching across the entrance to the Arm, was designed to protect the city from attack in the rear. Perhaps it was during the progress of the work that his daughter Mercy (named for her paternal grandmother) was born on George's Island in the harbor, 3 July, 1785.<sup>3</sup>

These multifarious occupations, nevertheless, presented nothing either novel or exciting, and he had already begun to grow restive under his "daily and constant attendance on duty," and to make efforts towards bettering his official, or at least his financial position. To that end he had addressed Carleton in quaint yet illuminating phrases: "Penetrated with the most indelible Characters for the past favours — I humbly beg that I may be pardoned for this intrusion also. . . . The Commander in Chief is not unacquainted with my expectations, in coming out to America with him nor likewise with my disagreeable and unstable situation at this place . . . for a Virtuous and affectionate Wife, and four amiable Children,<sup>4</sup> who are entirely dependant on me for their subsistence, that have always had a sufficiency if not affluence till this time. . . . I have spent upwards of eight years, the prime of my Life to support Government I have served faithfully spilt my blood, and at this moment feel the pain of my wounds which I received four years since, all which I have losst, and endured for the support of the

<sup>1</sup> The usual grant was 200 acres to a single man, 500 to a family, 1000 to a field officer in a loyalist regiment, etc. A. C. Flick, *Loyalism in New York during the American Revolution*, 190.

<sup>2</sup> W. F. Parker, *Life of Daniel McNeill Parker*, 12.

<sup>3</sup> Nutting Papers. She died young.

<sup>4</sup> Elizabeth, James, and Susanna must therefore all have died during the wanderings and exposures of the war, leaving John, Mary No. 2, Mercy (who died the next year), and little Sophia Elizabeth.

Government of Great Britain. I humbly pray that the General in his great humanity penetration and goodness, would be pleased to take my Case into his consideration and appoint me survayor of Lumber for his Majesty's works in this province at 5/- per Day which is the same I had at Penobscott, in addition to my pay as overseer . . . in lieu of being Engineer or any thing in my expectations precedent, and indeed will prevent my being under the necessity of troubling my Friends in England, or your Excellency any further on Government account."<sup>1</sup> Evidently the friends in England were not to be disregarded, for in due course came the desired appointment,<sup>2</sup> and "with a Salary of 10/- per Diem."<sup>3</sup>

As a respectable official and a considerable landowner in Nova Scotia, John Nutting would now have had little to worry him, had not the fate of his Penobscot property been wavering in the balance. The peace commissioners were at loggerheads over the eastern boundary between the American and the British possessions. Should it be the Penobscot River or the St. Croix? Long and stubborn was the controversy, but we may almost fancy poor Nutting's bad luck in real estate as tipping the scale at last. Early in January,<sup>4</sup> 1784, the barracks and store-houses that had cost him so much labor were emptied and fired, and the King's troops "reluctantly" — most reluctantly — abandoned Penobscot Fort, the last

<sup>1</sup> Nutting to Carleton, Halifax, 10 May, 1783. iv. Papers in the Royal Institution, 411. (New York Public Library Transcripts.) *Précis* in iv. Historical Manuscripts Commission Reports, American Manuscripts, 76.

<sup>2</sup> "from Colonel Morse of the Engineers . . . dated 23<sup>d</sup> December 1783." xiii. American Loyalists Transcripts, 299. Public Library, New York City.

<sup>3</sup> xxviii. *Idem*, 193.

<sup>4</sup> In spite of its romantic interest, the exact date seems still unknown. J. Williamson, "British Occupation of Penobscot." i. Maine Historical Society Collections, 2d Series, 393 *et seq.* Carleton had ordered evacuation, with "no delay," more than three months before, and so notified Hancock. iv. Historical Manuscripts Commission Reports, American Manuscripts, 378, 391. But like a spoiled child, Massachusetts, once her object was within her grasp, almost refused to take it. Local tradition asserts that the importance of the place induced the ministry to send orders to delay the evacuation till the American government had complied with the various articles of the treaty, but that these orders did not arrive till after the garrison had set sail, and nearly reached Halifax. W. Ballard, "Castine, 1815." ii. Bangor Historical Magazine, 51.



post they held on American soil, and New Ireland became one more province in the realm of might-have-been. According to Mr. Secretary Knox,<sup>1</sup> the place never would have been evacuated at all, but would have remained to mark the seaward end of the British boundary-line, had not the jealousy of Wedderburne and the ignorance of Shelburne allowed it slip out of their hands and fixed the American terminus at Eastport instead.<sup>2</sup> Luckily for Massachusetts she had John Adams on the board of treaty commissioners, and his insistent diplomacy achieved what five warlike attempts had failed in.

The statesman mourned for a province *in posse*: the carpenter mourned for good acres *in esse*. His Cambridge property was already hopelessly lost, and it needs but a modicum of imagination to picture his chagrin at beholding his cherished farm on the Bagaduce, his recently-acquired homestead by the fort, his cleared lands and his mill privileges, after all his schemes to secure them, slip thus from his grasp forever. No recourse remained but to put in vigorous claims for compensation before the commissioners appointed to investigate and reward the services and sufferings of the loyalists. As usual, he lost little time, and on 15 January, 1784, made oath at Halifax to a moving memorial, accompanied by sundry affidavits and schedules regarding his property lost at Cambridge and Penobscot.<sup>3</sup> This he entrusted to Samuel Sparhawk to present for him in London, "as it was not in the power of Mr. Nutting personally to attend your Hon'ble Board within the time limited for receiving the claims."<sup>4</sup> Consideration of this was apparently deferred till the next year, when the Commissioners visited Halifax to hear claimants on the spot. The indefatigable Nutting thereupon presented another memorial,<sup>5</sup> backing it up with various

<sup>1</sup> Knox to Cooke. Ealing, 27 January, 1808. vi Historical Manuscripts Commission Reports, Various, 227.

<sup>2</sup> Most of the loyalists who were forced out of Penobscot removed to St Andrews, opposite Eastport, thus continuing the border-line existence which they had already elected.

<sup>3</sup> Audit Office, Loyalist Series, Bundle 51, Public Record Office, London

<sup>4</sup> Memorial of Sam'l Sparhawk "in behalf of John Nutting, March 25 1784. Bedford Court, R'd Lyon Square." *Ibid*

<sup>5</sup> Audit Office, Loyalist Series, Bundle 51, Public Record Office, London. Duplicated in xiii American Loyalists Transcripts, 289. Public Library, New York City.

documentary proofs and the personal testimony both of himself and of sundry other witnesses, including young Lieutenant John. The hearing<sup>1</sup> was on 29 December, 1785, and the decision<sup>2</sup> was made the same day. The Commissioners, apparently in view of the various payments already made to him by government, confined themselves to a consideration of his property losses. The Cambridge claims were disallowed, the house "appearing to have been mortgaged to some of his Wife's Family & to be now in their possession." So was the claim for the "House built at Penobscot after that Post was occupied by the British Troops." So was the claim for "Furniture Lumber & Cattle lost at different places — there being no proof of Loss." In short, only £200 were awarded, for "500 Acres on Penobscot River with Houses Improvements and  $\frac{1}{3}$ <sup>4</sup> of a Saw Mill." Even that was "only conditional. Proof of Confiscation and Sale is required." This was subsequently furnished; and after solemn affidavits from various members of the Walton family as to the Cambridge property,<sup>3</sup> the claimant was "allowed on revision" an additional £100 for that, "after deducting mortgage."<sup>4</sup>

Unable therefore to capitalize his loyalty to any great extent, John Nutting seems to have settled down into a steady-going farmer of Newport, N. S. He probably carried out to the letter the various conditions on which all the crown grants had been made; — "within three years from date hereof to clear and work three acres of or for every fifty acres in the tract hereby granted . . . or clear and drain three acres of swampy or sunken ground, or drain three acres of marsh, . . . or put or keep on his said lands three Neat Cattle" or "to erect on some part of his said Lands One dwelling house to Contain twenty feet in length by sixteen feet in

<sup>1</sup> Fully reported in xiii. American Loyalists Transcripts, 297 *et seq.* Public Library, New York City. The witnesses besides Nutting *père et fils*, were Samuel Pool and Nathaniel Bust [*? Rust*], formerly of Cambridge, and Josiah Henny, of Penobscot. For the latter cf. G. A. Wheeler, *History of Castine*, 201.

<sup>2</sup> xxviii. American Loyalists Transcripts, 197. Public Library, New York City.

<sup>3</sup> Affidavits of John Walton of Cambridge and Benjamin Walton of Reading, 29 October, 1788. Audit Office, Loyalist Series, Bundle 51, Public Record Office, London.

<sup>4</sup> 12 December, 1788. xxviii. American Loyalists Transcripts, 197. Public Library, New York City. A revision after such an interval certainly suggests considerable powers of "pull" or persuasion.

breadth." He was a man of importance in the community, too, for his influence is unmistakable in the naming of the next town to Newport, perpetuating his wife's family name of Walton. His last child, a son of his old age, was born 12 September, 1787, and named from his two grandfathers James Walton <sup>1</sup>

So passed the afternoon of life. But was that active and ingenious spirit content in the improvement of a back-country farm and the routine duties of a surveyor of lumber? He had taken responsible part in many a stirring scene, in militia musters, in famous sieges, in English fort and Spanish prison, in concentration camps, in councils of the state, in fateful despatch-bearing. He had been faithful to his king, even unto banishment and double confiscation. Did he not long to play the man again? When his old wounds burned and stung in the foggy autumn nights, did not his thoughts turn back to his early frontier campaigns, to his "fall trainings" in Cambridge, to his expedition with Colonel Small, to his fight with the privateer? When the surf from Blomidon boomed on his beach, did he not hear again in fancy the guns of the *Vengeance*, or the 24's of Collier at Castine, or the cannonade from Copp's Hill? Did he not sometimes yearn as he passed among the farmer folk for his old neighbors in cultured and beautiful Cambridge, or his polished friends and patrons in glittering London? If we read the man aright, there can be but one answer.

We know, moreover, that to the end his old land-hunger and *wanderlust* were strong upon him, for he was constantly buying, selling, and mortgaging lots,<sup>2</sup> extending his operations as far as Cape Breton and its neighborhood. But his financial ill-luck, like the villain of the melodrama, still pursued him. When he died, intestate, late in 1800, although he was described as "gentleman," and as possessing "two lots of 500 acres each in Newport, being part of lands commonly called Mantular Lands" and "a 200 acre lot of Land in the County of Sidney No 9, and a Town Lot in Man-

<sup>1</sup> Married Mary Elizabeth MacLean, 10 July, 1813, and had six children. Died 7 July, 1870, at Halifax. Nutting Papers. Stone in Camp Hill Cemetery there. He rose to eminence in the law, was clerk of the crown in the supreme court of the province, and at his death was senior member of the Nova Scotia Bar. He had a 500 acre grant in Newport, close to his father's.

<sup>2</sup> His numerous local deals may be traced in Windsor (Nova Scotia) Deeds, *passim*.



chester, No. 3 Letter M," — yet his estate was found insolvent, and a general sale was made of his property. The inventory included "7 cows, 1 yolk of oxen, 2 yolk of steers, 2 Heighfords," and other livestock, "1 boat," a reminder of his seafaring days, and a curious list of his tools: "3 axes, 1 Handsaw, 1 Crosscut saw, 1 Two feet rule, 2 augers, 2 chissels, 1 foot adds, 1 Tray adds, 2 grindstones, 1 Crow Barr, 1 Jack Plain, 1 Iron square, 1 draw knife, 3 files, 1 pinchers, 1 Do. Hammer." Only the merest necessities of life were exempted and "left in the Hands of the Wido Mary Nutting & her children."<sup>1</sup>

While his relict thus suffered the penalty of his characteristic pecuniary misfortunes, she luckily reaped the benefit of his equally characteristic friendships with the great and influential. The Duke of Kent, Queen Victoria's father, then just quitting the post of commander-in-chief in Nova Scotia, "in consideration of her husband's services to the Crown, and his heavy losses at Cambridge by confiscation, . . . procured for the widow a special pension from the Crown."<sup>2</sup> Upon this subsidy, aided perhaps by her children's contributions, she managed to eke out an existence, possibly precarious but certainly protracted. She died about 1831, at "Loyal Hill."<sup>3</sup>

Such is the history, so far as gathered, of a Cambridge man born and bred, interesting not only for his all too uncommon type of personality among his loyalist neighbors, but for the curious speculations arising from his share in the historical events in which he played a part. If, for example, the strategists of Great Britain, uninfluenced by his solicitude for his eligible farm, had established the post in Maine at some other point than Penobscot — a point on which the attack of the Provincials might have been successful, — if the only organized naval force of the colonies, instead of disappearing utterly, had returned, encouraged by victory, to take, under the masterly strategy of Washington, a definite and co-ordinated part in the current and subsequent campaigns of the Revolution, — who can say how much the struggle would have been

<sup>1</sup> Hants Probate Records at Windsor, Nova Scotia. His son-in-law, Daniel McNeill, was appointed administrator, 21 November, 1800.

<sup>2</sup> W. F. Parker. *Life of Daniel McNeill Parker*, 12.

<sup>3</sup> Nutting Papers.

altered and shortened? What would have been the effect on the story of American privateering? Again, if that post had been to the eastward of Penobscot, even had the result of the expedition been the same as it was, where might the Canadian boundary now be fixed? What chances for an actual New Ireland of to-day?

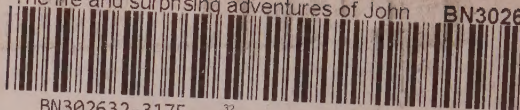
And the Muse of History (doubtless a polyglot dame) smiles inscrutably and replies, *Quæren sabet?*







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